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NOVA SCOTIA Government of Nova Scotia

Students Protected in Private College Bill

Department of Education and Culture (to July 99)
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A bill introduced in the House of Assembly today increases protections for students, and supports accessible, responsive training in Nova Scotia's private career colleges.

The bill, entitled the Private Career Colleges Regulation Act, also shares responsibility between government and industry in supporting and regulating quality education in the private career college system.

In recent years, the number of private career colleges has almost tripled, to 103 in 1998 from 39 in 1993. The colleges offer approximately 1,200 programs to about 6,500 students.

"Private career colleges offer training in existing and emerging growth industries, from high-tech computer programming to tourism, to environmental training," said Education and Culture Minister Robbie Harrison. "This bill adds the right protections for students and supports high-quality training -- providing Nova Scotians with the tools they need to find jobs and make the most of their lives."

To build accountability, all private career colleges must now register with the Department of Education and Culture. The college must provide details on specific programs, instructor qualifications, facilities and equipment, and finances. Registered colleges must submit annual reports, financial statements and student contracts.

Students will be better informed when making training choices. Each student will have a signed contract detailing what the college must offer --when, how and where. Students will also receive copies of the tuition refund policy, attendance policy, and graduation and employment statistics.

A training completion fund will guarantee that students can complete their training in the event of a college closure. The fund is created from contributions by registered colleges.

Working committees will advise on program and policy issues. The department will draw on different people at different times for the committees, depending on the issue.

As an added assurance that training meets industry standards, career colleges must provide an external review of new curriculum.

Judy Smith, president of the Association of Private Trainers and Career Colleges of Nova Scotia, said the industry recognizes the need for new legislation.

"The right legislation can support the continued growth and

development of the private training industry, while ensuring students are protected," she said.

Said Mr. Harrison: "We welcome the support and partnership with this association, other industry associations, and individual schools. We have a common interest in providing quality training, and in helping students succeed. This bill supports this shared responsibility."

The association, individual schools and students shaped the recommendations in this bill. Each career college received a questionnaire, which formed the basis for meetings across the province in February, and followup meetings in the spring. Consultation will continue as regulations are developed, and as working committees and a private career colleges appeal board are formed.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: A backgrounder on the Private Career Colleges Regulation Act is available; please e-mail CNSrelease@gov.ns.ca or call 902-424-4492 for a copy.

Text of Private Career Colleges Regulation Act (Bill No. 38)

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